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slums were as acutely bad in Shanghai as anywhere else in the world. 369 Living standards among the Chinese were correspondingly low. A 511 British visitor to Shanghai in 1843, one month after the founding of the foreign settlements, gave as his opinion in an account of the city that "in no other country in the world is there less real misery and want than in China."[13] This may be taken as a reflection of the state of Europe in 1843, and as a measure of what the second half of the nineteenth century, beginning with the Taiping Rebellion, did to China, but it also shows what happened in Shanghai (as it had happened in eighteenth-century England) when the industrial revolution came to a peasant society. Factory conditions and slum housing were bad, but scarcely worse than the condition of perpetual refugees who had neither factory nor slum to go to. In 1935, a comparatively peaceful year in China, the Shanghai Municipal Council collected 5,590 exposed corpses from the streets of the International Settlement alone. In 1937 the figure reached 20,746.[14]

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369 An effective public health program under such conditions was 744 impossible, and foreign residents lived in constant fear of epidemics. Cholera, smallpox, typhoid, dysentery and plague recurred periodically, and cases could not be restricted to the Chinese. The Council's attempts to improve the public health situation were also hampered by foreign and Chinese property owners. A code of public health laws was submitted to the Ratepayers' Association as early as 1903, but was voted down by "those with vested interests."[15] Later attempts met with similar obstruction, and nothing was ever done on the scale called for. Money dominated Shanghai, and everything gave place to it.

369 Even by 1941, however, it was still possible to walk from the center of the Bund to the unchanged agricultural countryside in three or four hours. It was less than ten miles, and the rice paddies and peasant villages could be seen clearly from any of the city's tall buildings. This was one of the sharpest and most dramatic boundaries in the world. Traditional China continued unbroken almost to the limits of the foreign settlements. It was hard to see there any sign of Shanghai's influence. The final proof of that influence came with the entry of the Communist armies into Shanghai in 1949.